MODELLING THE LINK BETWEEN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES, ORGANISATIONAL TRUST AND EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

While past studies have established a significant and positive relationship between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction. However, the fundamental interaction behind this link remain unclear. To address this gap, calls for further research has been suggested, particularly on the interactive process through which conflict management styles, specifically, collaborating, accommodating, compromising, avoiding and dominating styles were cast as the key dimensions of conflict management styles that are likely to influence employee job satisfaction. Hence, in the present study a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from Academic and Non-academic staff of some selected public tertiary institutions located in North-Central and North-Western parts of Nigeria. Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was adopted to test the hypothesized research model. The quantitative results indicated that collaborating, dominating, avoiding and compromising conflict management styles were significantly and positively related to employee job satisfaction. On the contrary, accommodating style demonstrated no significant effect on employee job satisfaction. The results further showed that organisational trust moderated the relationship between collaborating, avoiding, and compromising styles and employee job satisfaction. But, no significant interaction effect was found between organisational trust and both dominating and accommodating styles. Implications of the results for future research and practice, as well as the limitations of the study are highlighted.

KEYWORDS: *Employee Job Satisfaction, Conflict Management Styles, Organizational Trust PLS-SEM*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, the incessant strike actions embarked upon by workers have become a subject of huge concern among practitioners and scholars of organisational attitudes and still remains a topic of widespread attention and interest among researchers (Seniwoliba, 2013). Strike action is a prevalent channel through which employees express their grudges with their working conditions in order to attain a desired result, as one of the strategies of industrial action that employees used to ensure that Government and employers put in place favourable policies to the employees and failure to do that could lead to unpleasant reaction and eventual destabilization of the conducive work environment (Nnoyelu, 2008). Despite the severe consequences caused by it, it is a legitimate deadlock breaking strategy used by workers when discussions between Management and trade unions reach an impasse (Cohen & Matee, 2014). For example, the first notable strike in Nigeria happened in 1945 and ever since to date different unions and groups have been embarking on strike actions across the different sectors of the economy. The educational sector particularly tertiary institutions have been involved with the greatest number of strike actions among all sectors (Olakunle, 2011). The effect of these closures of schools and academic programs has thus led to tremendous setbacks such as disrupted academic programs, undeserved extension in students study years and consequently, this has contributed to employees' job dissatisfaction and students' academic performance. For instance, empirical studies (Momodu, Matudi & Momodu, 2014) have suggested that organisations continue to suffer from perennial interruptions at the workplace as a result of constant strikes being embarked upon by employees (Olaniyi & Aina 2014; Olusegun Ajayi, 2014). In particular, the frequency and intensity of strike actions in Nigerian has become a very big source of worry. For example, Olusegun Ajayi (2014) found that strike action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Polytechnic and Colleges of Education in Nigeria

have created unpalatable misunderstanding between the Government, Management of the various tertiary institutions and trade unions and this has affected the working relationships among the parties.

Yet, the numerous strike actions embarked upon by employees have not secured the needed industrial harmony in Nigeria organisations, agencies, and parastatals (Onah, Igwebuike, & Ojonemi, 2016). This thus far, has caused a big setback in educational industry in Nigeria and hence, there have calls for other alternatives to strike actions to be adopted. As such, the achievability of peaceful and harmonious work environment could be possible via other forms of industrial actions besides the deployment of strike actions, such as the possibility of the adoption of the appropriate conflict Management styles model (Adavbiele, 2015).Adding to that, understanding the fundamental reason why other alternatives to strike action be applied in enhancing employee job satisfaction has become imperative.

As a result of the above highlighted assertion, hence the aim of this research study is to explore the potential moderating role of organisational trust on the link between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction. Notably, however, research on the relationship between conflict management styles, organisational trust job satisfaction, appears to be non-existent in literature and hence, this study offers new empirical and theoretical insights into this relationship.,

Towards this end, the rest of this study is designed as follows. We first review the concepts of employee job satisfaction, conflict management styles as well as organisational trust. Then, we review the existing prior studies that relate the concepts towards the formulation of hypotheses. In the next section, we discuss the research method including the participants and procedure, measurement instruments, analytical approach and model estimation. Next, we discuss the results of the study. We draw conclusion from the results of the study, then we highlight the managerial implications of the results. In the final section, the limitations and suggestions for future research will be highlighted.

2.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT
Employee job satisfaction as a phenomenon has been extensively investigated (Gu, Wang, Sun, & Xu, 2010), defined as the individual's perception and assessment of the overall work environment. Additionally, it is also perceived as having a positive emotional enhancement arising from the evaluation of one's job or job experiences' (Islam & Siengthai, 2009). In particular, the major challenge faced by organisations is how to continuously maintain the right level of employee job satisfaction that would lead to peak performances, Thus, some researchers have suggested that high levels of satisfaction are significant contributors to exceptional performance (Tillman, Smith, & Tillman, 2010),as such in most of the organizations, satisfying the needs of workers remains the main employee job satisfaction-enhancement strategy (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011). However, current research developments have challenged this recommendation, which explains the multi-factorial character of employee job satisfaction (Mafini & Pooe ,2013). Given these widespread challenges it is hardly surprising that many researchers and scholars have noted and called for further research studies to improve employees' level of job satisfaction within organizations. Unfortunately, there is paucity of empirical studies on this issue in the Nigeria context on how to create a conducive work environment that enables enhanced employee job satisfaction levels besides strike actions.

Notably, the increase of feelings of satisfaction is also been found to be influenced by the trust that employees have towards the organisation (Mehmet, 2020). The concept of trust within an organisation is described as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party". Organizational trust is expressed as an employee's perception of support that organization provides and the belief that the leader will be the right speaker and will stand behind his word. Notably, prior studies have explored the effects of organisational trust across different contexts, however, the findings of such studies suggested that if the organization does not have sufficient trust, the individuals will have to waste more time and power to control others' behavior in order to preserve their own benefits.

In addition, authors further opine that the high level of trust between the members of the organization would generally improve performance and ultimately it would contribute to enhanced job satisfaction. In other words, when there is little or no organizational trust, employees show less job satisfaction and as a consequence employee start to act in an attitude like "us against them" that can affect their performance. Consequent upon the research paradigm of organizational trust being expressed as "a feeling of confidence and support in an employer and to the belief that ultimately, organizational action will prove beneficial for employees, the present research work will attempt to explore how trust in the organisation can encourage employee job satisfaction in the workplace.

More so, a number of prior studies, have explored and found that unresolved conflict can lead to increased hostility in the workplace. Researchers have also posited that conflict may have a direct relationship to employee health and well-being. More so Researchers have

concluded that a constructive approach to conflict in the workplace is essential to effective employee productivity (Fisher, 2010). Past studies have suggested that the use of effective conflict management styles may likely lead to many useful outcomes by promoting the creative potential of employees, the capability to sharpen learning, psychological well-being, satisfaction with organization, and strengthening of teamwork. Contrary to this, when conflicts are not managed properly, workers experience dissatisfaction stress, poor decision making and judgment. For example, allowing a climate of conflict in the workplace to go unresolved can lead to increased hostility and decreased employee satisfaction (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Grohmann, & Kauffeld, 2011). In spite of the increasing levels of extant literature conceptualizing the links between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction at the workplace, this association has thus far not been adequately and empirically studied. Therefore, the current research will aim at addressing the gap in the literature by investigating the role of conflict management styles on employee job satisfaction at the workplace.

More importantly, researchers have reported inconsistent results exist between these variables. As a result, the use of moderators has been recommended to help explain these relationships (Jaramillo Mulki, & Boles, 2013). Even though theory and empirical evidence suggests a positive relationship between of conflict management styles and organisational trust and employee job satisfaction in a variety of studies, little work has explored the moderating processes by which conflict management styles and organisational trust exert their influences on satisfying employees at work. Thus, there is a need to pay more attention to better understand the fundamental interactive process of how conflict management styles and organisational trust could influence employee job satisfaction at the workplace. The current research shall conjecture that organisational trust may be a key moderating variable in explaining the association between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction.

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW
3.1.1 Employee job satisfaction
Employee job satisfaction (EJS) can be defined as a person's emotional orientation towards their current job role and is related to a person's behavior in the workplace, thus expressing feelings of joy or dissatisfaction at work (Adamy, 2018; Singh & Onahring, 2019). Employees are the most valuable strategic resources and asset for the organisation in order to achieve effectiveness and (Siswanto & Yuliana, 2022), similarly any effective human resource management strategies should be able to promote employee satisfaction, (Hendri, 2019; Li, Liu, Yuan & Ju, 2017). Employee job satisfaction is a very important prerequisite for organizations that is needed to build a proper interrelationships relationship between the company and employees, because job satisfaction is a series of employee perceptions that will affect employee attitudes and behavior while working, so it is also important to employee commitment to work, so it will ensuring employees do their best to achieve company goals (Cherif, 2020; Mira, Choong, &Thim, 2019). For example, Herzberg's theory explains that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations affect employee job satisfaction (Franczukowska, Kreczal, Knapp, & Baumgartner, 2021). Previous studies also suggest managers to use Herzberg's theory to better understand the factors that could increase employee job satisfaction and affect work (Denton & Maatgi, 2016). Managers should establish policies that increase satisfaction and achievement, such as conflict management policies and strategies, (Ali, 2016; Huang & Su, 2016).

In another research conducted by Pan (2015) found that job satisfaction is subjective and specific to each individual, therefore the satisfaction felt by one employee may not meet the needs of other employees. Based on the results of De Ber, Tims, and Bakker, (2016), it suggested that improving the quality of the exchange of relations between superiors and employees is considered to increase work engagement and ultimately increase satisfaction, which can contribute positively to both employees and the organization. There are differences for various researchers in measuring employee job satisfaction, in their research, Ezzat & Ehab (2018) and Luz, de Paula, & de Oliveira, (2018) evaluate the returns that are measured by satisfaction of salaries and promotions, employee's level of comfort with colleagues and superiors, and the number of tasks assigned to the employee. Another factor that affects employee job satisfaction is emphasis on the influence of leadership style. As such, employees are expected to develop high-quality relationships between supervisors and employees, so it is expected that a more positive emotional state will increase satisfaction and will create employee happiness (Franczukowska et al., 2021).

 We find that all the above models have been widely employed in the study of employee job satisfaction studies and gaps have being identifies, Therefore, this current research proposal notably argues that both theoretically and practically, other research hypotheses should be derived and tested to guide further studies on the factors related to employee job satisfaction.

3.1.2 Conflict Management Styles
Conflict is a theme that has been studied by many researchers, for example, Rahim (2001) argues that conflict is something that arises naturally among humans when two or more social entities, such as individuals, groups, or organizations interacting with each other in achieving their goals. In mitigating the negative effects caused by the conflict, conflict management will take place to prevent the

organization from moving away from its stated objectives. Conflict management according to Wirawan (2009) is a strategy whereby organizations and individuals work to recognize and manage differences, by overcoming the efficiency of the financial and human costs of conflict management difficulties. Prasad and Junni (2017) argue that conflict management can be interpreted as an implementation of the top management team's innovation by formulating strategies directly and in the process of compilation must be adaptive, sensitive and understand the dynamics that occur, such as communication flow, social integration, and environment. In managing a conflict according to Rahim (1983), there are five styles that can be applied for managing conflicts, such as collaborating (COL) accommodation (ACC), dominating (DOM), avoiding (AVO)style and compromising (COP) styles. Collaborating style has a high attention to self and others by individuals who use it. This style becomes problem solvers and the character always involves all members of the group in the distribution of information. According to Rahim (2001), collaborating style can also be used as a way to check the differences in order to achieve the required solutions. Meanwhile, accommodating style is different from collaborating style where caring and attention to self is low but high in others. Compromising style based on Williams (2011) can be defined as a situation in which each of the groups involved in the conflict make a deal on several points based on the results of a joint compromise. Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) argue that the dominating style is a style of conflict management that forces other parties involved in the conflict to have the party obey. When described in accordance with its definition, the style of domination has a very low character toward others in the sense of attention, and is very high on its own concern. For avoiding style, Williams (2011) defines conflict management style by ignoring the conflict as its action even though the individual is well aware of the surrounding conflicts. Avoiding style tends to be less concerned about both yourself and others.

Worthy of note is the assertion that among these, three conflict management styles namely collaborating, accommodating and compromising styles were perceived as peaceful styles (Robinson, 2010; Behfar et al., 2011; Ayub, AlQurashi, Al-Yafi, & Jehn, 2017). Avoiding and dominating styles are generally discouraged in workplace settings because avoiding style does not solve the problem of any conflicting group and hence the problem stands still. The significant feature of this style is the indifferent attitude towards the problem which is shown by changing the topic or diverting the attention of another person towards any other situation (Currie, Gormley, Roche, & Teague, 2017; De Clercq, Thongpapanl, & Dimov, 2009). On the other hand, the use of avoiding and dominating styles is also justified while interacting with highly assertive people or those who have less knowledge or skills. Sometimes it is used to enforce a novel or a technical decision (Rahim, 2012). For instance, a study that examined the preferences of conflict management styles of Pakistani schoolteachers in their encounters with principal and colleagues involved data being collected from 100 school teachers with the help of an indigenous tool titled as Organizational Conflict Management Inventory. The first preference of schoolteachers for conflict-handling styles was collaborating, second preference was avoiding style and third preference was the compromising style (Zulfiqar, 2014). Another similar study explored the impact of the college sector, marital status, and family structure on conflict handling styles of college teachers. The sample included 120 college teachers who completed the Organizational Conflict Management Inventory. Results showed that teachers serving in public colleges used collaborating style more than those teaching in private colleges. Female teachers were highly dominating than male teachers. Additionally, those who were single and living in joint families accommodated more than their counterparts (Saeed, 2015).

3.1.3 Organisational Trust
Trust is an important part of our lives in terms of permanent relationships and achievements in the individual and organizational spheres. Although it is regarded as important for all facets of social and organizational life according to scientists and practitioners, the concept of trust maintains its complexity and uncertainty. In general, experts acknowledge that organizational trust has communication-based, dynamic, multi-facetedness and lack of understanding. The issue of trust often arises when there is something at risk in any of the parties involved (Wicks & Berman, 2004). Specifically, the concept of trust is seen as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. In other words, Organizational trust is expressed as an employee's perception of support that organization provides and the belief that the leader will be the right speaker and will stand behind his word. In this sense, trust is the foundation of all internal relations both horizontally and vertically.

 Bromiley and Cummings argue that if the organization does not have sufficient trust, the individuals will have to waste more time and power to control others' behavior in order to preserve their own benefits. In addition, authors stated that, in the reverse case, the high level of trust between the members of the organization would generally improve performance and ultimately it would contribute to profitability (Bromiley & Cummings, 1996). Along with that, when there is little or no organizational trust, employees show less job satisfaction (Tosun & Ozkan, 2023) and as a consequence and employee start to act in an attitude like "us against them" that can affect their performance. Accordingly, Organizational trust (ORT) as "a feeling of confidence and support in an employer that includes

employee faith in corporate goal attainment and organizational leaders, and to the belief that ultimately, organizational action will prove beneficial for employees". (Gilbert & Tang, 1998).

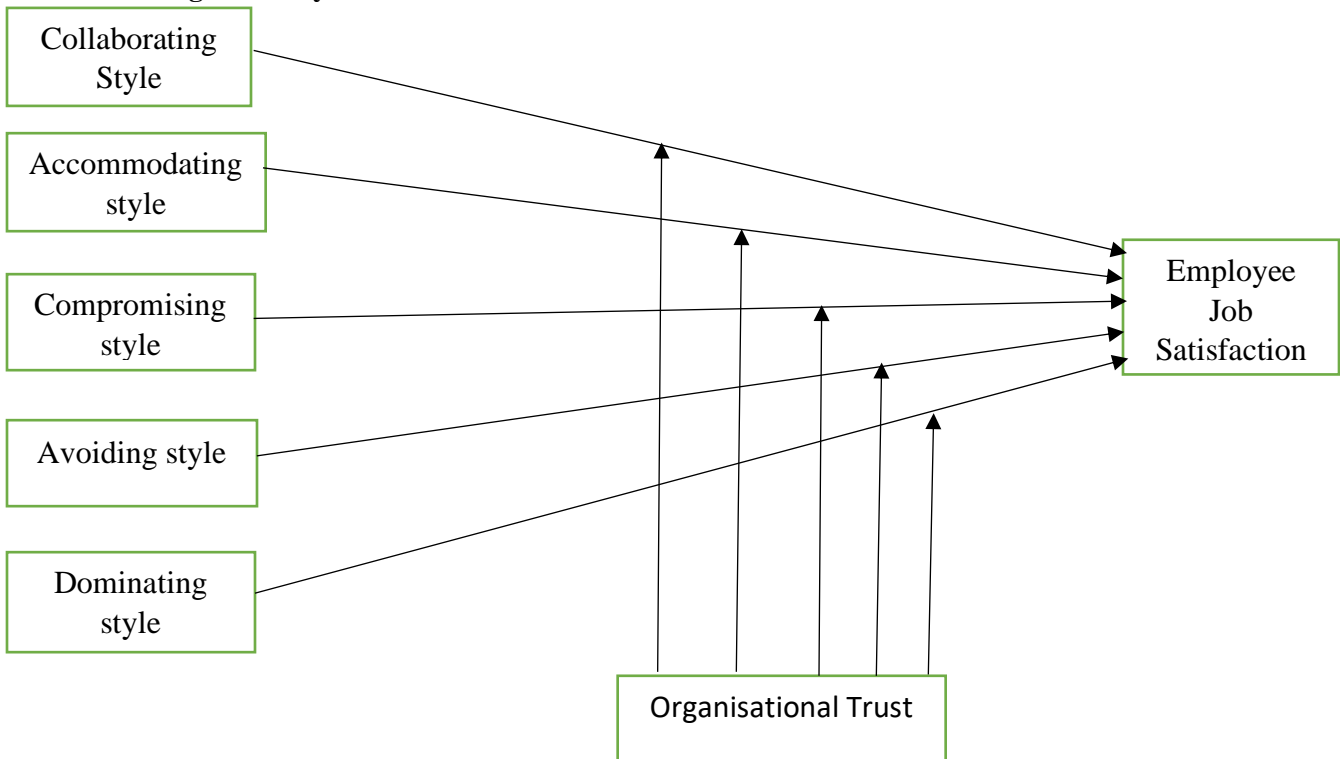## 4.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Conflict Management Style

Fig.1 *Theoretical Framework*

5.1 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

5.1.1 Conflict Management Styles and Employee Job Satisfaction

Numerous studies have shown that conflict management styles may strategically increase employee job satisfaction. For instance, Rahim (2002) suggested that applying the dual concern model of five conflict management styles are the most effective approach to handle conflict among employees. Alzahrani (2013) found that one of the key factors that influence an employee's job satisfaction is the effectiveness in handling conflict that arises in the organization. More so, each of these styles has distinct consequence on job satisfaction. For example, as Eslami & Gharakhani (2012) stated, between the five conflict management styles, the collaborating style holds the major role in developing employees' job satisfaction at the workplace. For example, Farooqi (2022) found support for positive relationship between collaborating conflict management style with several organisational outcomes such as organisational productivity, effectiveness, job performance and employee job satisfaction among others. More importantly, in another study conducted in China, (Chan & Huang, 2010) revealed that the use of integrating style increased subordinates' level of job satisfaction. Similarly, Griffin and Steen (2011) provided empirical evidence showing that the conflict management styles of compromising and accommodating were positively associated with employees' job satisfaction in higher secondary schools. However, on the other hand, Dhanapal, Alwie, Subramaniam, and Vashu (2013) found support for a negative relationship between dominating and avoiding styles and employee job satisfaction among academicians in a related study, Alzahrani (2013) found that there no statistically significant differences between any of the conflict management styles in a comparable study among Saudi Arabian and American principals.

Consistent with previous studies, Ahmed (2015) reported that conflict management styles (i.e., collaborating, compromising, accommodating, and dominating) had significant positive relationships with employee job satisfaction, apart from avoiding conflict management style which had no significant effect on job satisfaction. Recent studies have also reported that conflict management styles enhanced employee's level of job satisfaction across different research contexts (e.g., Anastasiou,2020; Haidarravy, & Anshori,2023). In tandem with above discussion, the following hypothesis are advanced:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between collaborating style of conflict management   and employee job satisfaction

H2: There will be a positive relationship between dominating style of conflict management   and employee job satisfaction

H3: There will be a positive relationship between avoiding style of conflict management and employee job satisfaction

H4: There will be a positive relationship between accommodating style of conflict management and employee job satisfaction

H5: There will be a positive relationship between compromising style s of conflict management and employee job satisfaction

5.1.2 Moderating role of Organisational trust

The majority of researchers have acknowledged that he most important indicator in organizational management is trust (Mishra & Morrissey, 1990). The constructive relationship of employees and managers are attained through organizational trust (Önder & Yavuz, 2019). Empirical studies have shown that organizational trust high level of trust between the members of the organization would generally improve performance and ultimately it may contribute to the heightened level of employee job satisfaction (Memduhoğlu & Zengin, 2017). More so, prior studies have suggested that when management apply a conflict management style that emphasizes satisfying the needs of both parties in conflict situations, management and subordinates are likely to develop relationships based on trust and respect (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Pars Sener, 2017). Notably, when employees perceive they are being valued and cared by the Management in the conflict situations, trusting relationships will be built. Employees will reciprocate by demonstrating positive work attitudes including higher job satisfaction at the workplace. For example, Poon, Mohd Salleh and Senik (2007) have contributed to the extant literature by examining the moderating effect of organisational trust on the relationship between perceived support and job satisfaction among 108 white-collar bank employees. Results of their empirical analyses showed that the association between perceived support and job satisfaction is contingent upon the trust they have for the organisation.

In addition, Alzyoud, (2018) investigated the moderating effect of trust on the link between work engagement and job satisfaction among a randomly selected 700 academic staff working in four Jordanian higher education universities. The findings of the research demonstrated that academics who worked in a low trust environment tend to be less engaged with their work as compared to those who worked in a high trust environment, even when both had high job satisfaction. Adnan, Berrin, and Aysegul (2017) established that organisational trust buffered the association between self-efficacy and job satisfaction, such that self-efficacy had more positive effects on job satisfaction when trust in organization was high.

Existing theoretical and empirical results also suggest that organisational can trust strengthen the effect conflict management styles on employee job satisfaction (Anastasiou,2020; Adnan, et.al.,2017; Chan, Huang, & Ng, 2008; Chandolia, & Anastasiou, 2020). As a result, applying different conflict management styles means that high level of trust between the employees and the organization would generally increase job satisfaction and ultimately it would contribute to harmonious relationship. Along with that, when there is little or no organizational trust, employees show less job satisfaction (Mehmet, & Ayse, 2019).

Given the aforesaid theoretical and empirical results, we advanced the following hypothesis:

H6: The relationship between collaborating style of conflict management and employee job satisfaction will be stronger when organisational trust is incorporated

H7: The relationship between dominating style of conflict management and employee job satisfaction will be stronger when organisational trust is incorporated

H8: The relationship between avoiding style of conflict management and employee job satisfaction will be stronger when organisational trust is incorporated

H9: The relationship between accommodating style of conflict management and employee job satisfaction will be stronger when organisational trust is incorporated

H10: The relationship between compromising style s of conflict management and employee job satisfaction will be stronger when organisational trust is incorporated

6.1 METHODOLOGY
6.1.1 Sample population
The present study adopted a quantitative approach to gather data from the target population. In any research, determining an appropriate sample size is important (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). Hence, it became necessary to consider several different techniques in determining an adequate sample size for a given population. On the basis of this argument, this study used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method. On that basis therefore, this study was limited to 321 sample of both academic and non-academic staff across six public tertiary institutions located within the North-Central and North-Western regions of Nigeria. Additionally, in the attempt to ensure maximum

representativeness of the proposed target population, a stratified random used as a sampling technique to generate the needed unbiased data and information from our participants.

6.1.2 Measures and Instrumentation
In this study, questionnaire was used to measure the three variables. These three variables consisted of independent, moderator, and dependent variables. Independent variable in this research is conflict management styles, organisational trust as the moderating variable and employee job satisfaction as the while dependent variable All the items were measured using the 5-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree.

6.1.2.1 Employee Job Satisfaction
Employee job satisfaction was assessed using the scale developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951). This scale consists of 18- items with five alternative responses i.e., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree which are scored 1 to 5. The scale contains 9 positive and 9 negative statements. The scale has high reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.87).

6.1.2.2 Conflict Management Styles
The 28-item Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II scale developed by Rahim (1983) was used to measure the conflict management styles. The scale is designed to measure five independent dimensions of conflict management styles: Collaborating (CL), Accommodating (AC), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), and Compromising (CO). The scale consists of 28 items and were arranged according to 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree).

6.1.2.3 Organisational Trust
A 4-item scale was developed by Tyler and Bies (1990) was adapted for the present study to evaluate the organizational trust perceptions of employees. A confirmatory factor analysis carried out by Polat (2009) showed that the scale had a good fit in terms of the strength of measuring organizational trust of employees.

7.1 ANALYSIS
Several software programs can be employed to analyse data, such as SPSS SmartPLS, Excel, STATPAK or SAS. However, the present study used SPSS software version 20 and SmartPLS 4 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) as instruments of data analysis (Hair et al., 2012).

8.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
PLS path modeling for the data analysis was used by this research study due to the fact that this approach is experiencing global acceptability in academic investigation (Hair et al., 2012).
A variety of assumptions regarding normality and multicollinearity, common method bias was evaluated (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), prior to testing the reliability, validity and of the study structure paths. The current study adopted a two-step process, that is:evaluation of measurement of structural models, for assessing and reporting PLS-SEM results
(Hair et al., 2010, 2014; Henseler et al., 2009)

8.1.1 Assessment of Measurement Model
As claimed by researchers and scholars, assessing measurement model involves the determination of the individual item reliability, internal consistency, content validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the research items (Hair et al. 2014; Henseler et al. 2009).

Thus, to determine individual item reliability assessment involves looking into the outer loadings of each of the items of each variable (Hair et al., 2012, 2014; Duarte & Raposo, 2010). Scholars have recommended a rule of thumb for retaining of items whereby items between 0.40 and 0.70 are set as the benchmark to be retained. (Hair et al., 2014). The outer loadings for each of the latent variable of the current study met the recommended benchmark of sufficiently reaching up to 0.5 or more (refer Table I) hence, the present study successfully satisfied the requirement of the individual item reliability criterion.

Similarly, for determining the internal consistency reliability, a rule of thumb to explain the composite reliability coefficient has recommended a threshold of 0.7 or above (Bagozzi & Yi,1988; Hair et al., 2011). Table I shows the composite reliability coefficients for each of the latent variable of the present study. The composite reliability coefficient, as displayed in Table I, for each of the latent variable varied from 0.703 to 0.93 this affirming the adequate internal consistency reliability of the items (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2011).

Convergent validity. The gauging of convergent validity with average variance extracted (AVE) is suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Nonetheless, Chin (1998) recommended that the AVE should be at least 0.50 or more to affirm the convergent validity of a particular variable. The AVE scores provided in Table I indicated that all the variables of the current research study have satisfied the minimum of 0.50 AVE, hence, it is affirmed that the research study signified adequate convergent validity (Chin, 1998). In particular, the discriminant validity the study items were estimated following Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. Based on, Fornell and Larcker's recommendation we used AVE with 0.5 value or higher. More so, for determining discriminant validity they have recommended that the square root of the AVE should be greater than the correlations among the latent constructs.

Table 1: Loadings, composite, reliability and average variance extracted

| Latent variables and Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Dominating Style		0.847	0.735
DOM4	0.916		
DOM5	0.792		
Accommodating Style		0.885	0.659
ACC1	0.865		
ACC2	0.841		
ACC3	0.829		
ACC4	0.703		
Avoiding Style		0.883	0.656
AVO3	0.763		
AV04	0.854		
AVO5	0.883		
AV06	0.729		
Collaborating Style		0.854	0.745
COL1	0.878		
COL2	0.848		
Compromising Style		0.825	0.612
COP1	0.806		
COP2	0.784		
COP3	0.758		
Organisational Trust		0.867	0.758
ORT2	0.845		
ORT3	0.931		
Employee Job Satisfaction		0.855	0.663
EJS11	0.788		
EJS12	0.842		
EJS13	0.813		
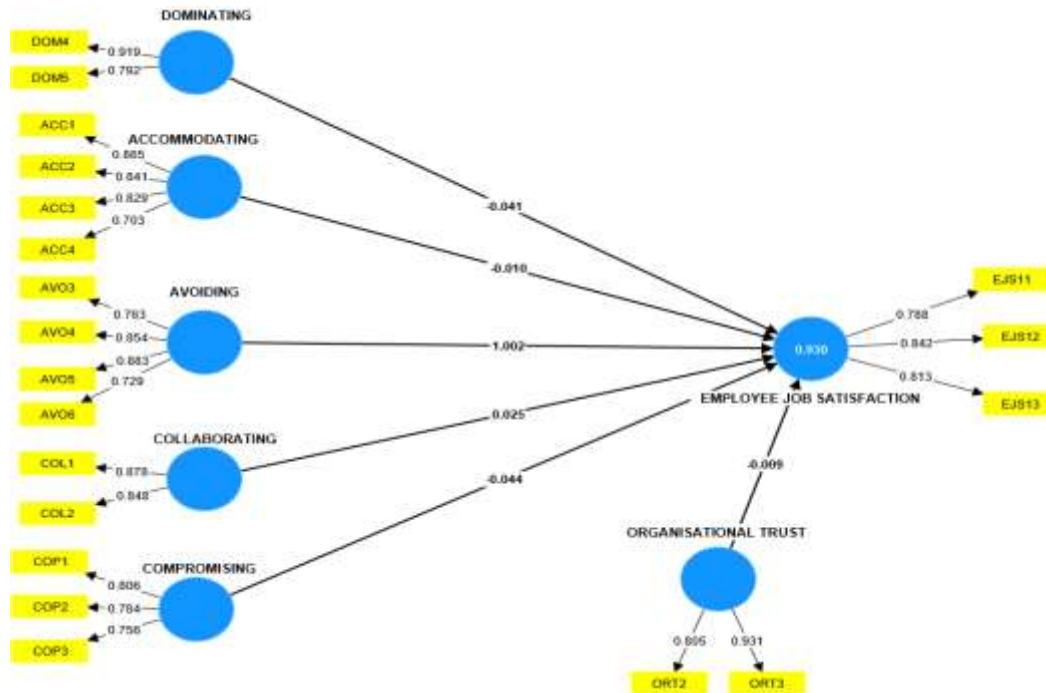
Figure 2: Measurement Model

Table1 and figure 2 above suggests that the AVE for all the latent constructs was above minimum threshold of 0.5. Hence, it could be attested that all the items used in the current study have met satisfactory level of validity and reliability testing.

8.1.2 Assessment of Structural Model

Our study employed the standard bootstrapping procedure with 500 bootstraps samples and 321 cases to ascertain the significance of the path coefficients following Hair et al. (2011, 2012, 2014) and Henseler et al.'s (2009) recommendation as depicted in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 3 and 4.

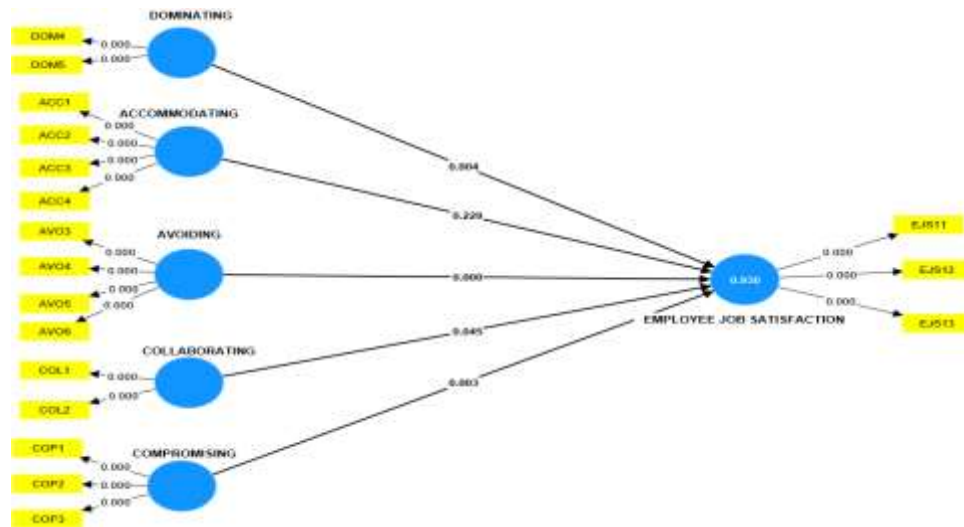**8.1.2.1 Results of structural model without interaction**

This study tests five hypotheses in the inner structural model without interactions. Hypothesis test results are displayed in Figure 3 and Table 2. The first hypothesis (H1) was supported, as collaborating (COL) style of conflict management was significantly related to employee job satisfaction (EJS) in the hypothesized direction ($\beta = 0.025$ t = 1.995, p < 0.045). The second hypothesis (H2) examined the effect of dominating (DOM) style of conflict management on EJS. Expectedly, Table 2 showed that this hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.040$, t = 2.668, p > 0.004). As earlier stated, H3 proposed that Avoiding (AVO) style of conflict management will be positively related to employee job satisfaction (EJS). Results shown in Table 2 and Figure 3 have revealed a significantly positive relationship between AVO and EJS ($\beta = 0.481$, t = 83.18, p < 0.000). Hence, supporting H3. As shown in Table 2, the fourth hypotheses(H4) was not supported, as accommodating (ACC) style of conflict was not significantly associated with EJS in the hypothesized direction ($\beta = 0.041$, t = 0.742, p < 0.229). The fifth Hypotheses(H5) examined the effect of compromising style of conflict management on employee job satisfaction (EJS). Expectedly, Table 2 showed that this hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.043$, t = 2.733, p > 0.003).

Table 2: Results of Structural model assessment without interactions

Hypotheses and relation	Beta	SE	T/value	P/value	Decision
H1: COL →EJS	0.025	0.015	1.995	0.045***	Supported
H2: DOM →EJS	0.040	0.015	2.668	0.004***	Supported
H3: AVO →EJS	0.481	0.012	83.18	0.000***	Supported
H4: ACC →EJS	0.014	0.013	0.742	0.229	Not Supported
H5: COP →EJS	0.043	0.016	2.733	0.003***	Supported

Note: ***p < 0.01 (one-tailed test)

Source: Researcher

Figure 3: Structural model without moderator variable

8.1.2.2 Results of structural model with interaction

As earlier stated, hypothesis six(H6) predicted that the relationship between COL and EJS is moderated by ORT. Precisely, this kind of relationship is stronger when the level of ORT is higher that when ORT is low. As expected, the findings depicted in Table 3 and Figure 4 demonstrated that the interaction terms representing COL X ORT ($\beta = 0.02$, t = 2.993, p < 0.001) were statistically significant. Hence, H6 was supported. Originally, both hypotheses (i.e. H8 and H10) stated that the relationship between both AVO and COP styles of conflict management and employee job satisfaction (EJS) are moderated by organisational trust (ORT). Expectedly, the results shown in Table 3 and Figure 3 demonstrated that the interaction terms representing AVO X ORT ($\beta = 0.01$, t = 2.950, p < 0.001) and COP X ORT ($\beta = 0.04$, t = 1.998, p < 0.001were statistically significant. Hence, H8 and H10 were supported.

On the other hand, the findings shown in Table 3 and Figure 4 did not support hypotheses seven (H7) and(H9), which stated that organisational trust (ORT) moderate the relationship between
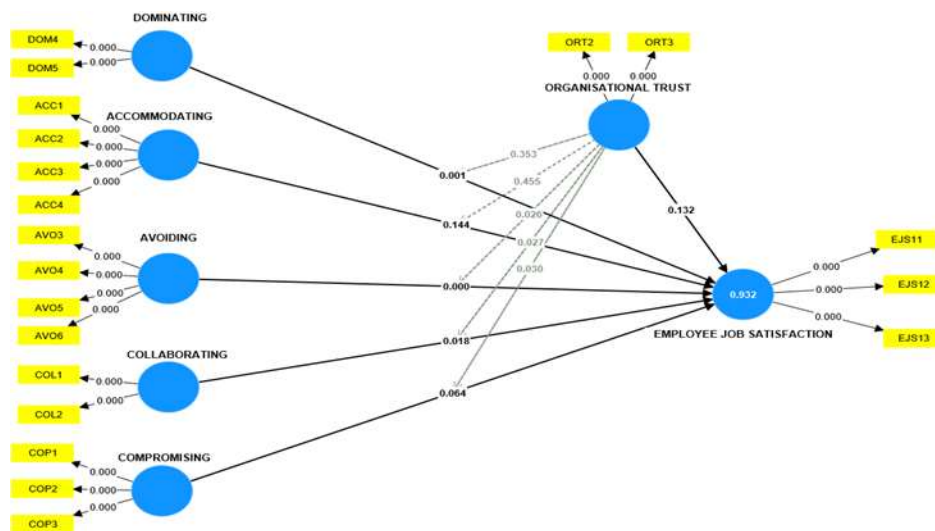dominating (DOM) conflict management style and employee job satisfaction (EJS)

Table 3: Results of Structural model assessment with interactions

Hypotheses and relation	Beta	T/value	P/value	Decision
H6: COL X ORT→EJS	0.02	2.993	0.001***	Supported
H7: DOM X ORT→EJS	0.03	0.379	0.353	Not supported
H8: AVO X ORT→EJS	0.01	2.950	0.002***	Supported
H9: ACC X ORT→EJS	0.01	0.114	0.455	Not supported
H10: COP X ORT→EJS	0.04	1.998	0.003***	Supported

Note: ***Significant at 0.01 (1-tailed)

COL (collaborating), ORT (organisational trust), EJS (employee job satisfaction), DOM (dominating), AVO (avoiding), ACC (accommodating), COP (compromising).
Source: Researcher

Figure 4: Structural model with interactions

9.1 DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine the moderating effect of organisational trust the links between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction among academic and non-academic staff of Nigerian public universities. This study demonstrated that the full PLS path model had reasonable explanatory power with the data, validating seven of ten hypotheses. Specifically, the findings showed that collaborating, dominating, avoiding, and compromising styles of conflict management were significantly and positively related to employee job satisfaction. However, accommodating style in conflict management was not found to be related to employee job satisfaction. With respect to organisational trust as a moderator, the findings revealed that organisational trust moderated the link between collaborating, avoiding and compromising styles of conflict management and employee job satisfaction. But, it did not moderate the relationships between both dominating and accommodating styles of conflict management and to employee job satisfaction. Taken together, the current study has advanced the understanding of the key determinants of employee job satisfaction and, in particular, the moderating effects of organisational trust.

Hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H5 stated that collaborating, dominating, avoiding and compromising conflict management styles significantly exert influence on employee job satisfaction respectively. Statistically, the current findings on the aforementioned styles revealed a positive link with employee job satisfaction, thus, supporting H1, H2, H3 and H5. These findings further reaffirm Rahim's (2002) claim that the crucial factors that influence employees 'job satisfaction is the effectiveness in handling conflict that transpires in an organisation. All these positive outcomes of conflict management styles in organisation will keep employees satisfied.

 The current results also appear to be in conformity with the results of previous researchers (e.g., Griffin &Steen ,2011; Farooqi, 2014, Tetteh & Obuobisa-darko, 2016; Briggs, 2020). For example, the field study of Griffin and Steen (2011) have shown that the conflict management styles of collaborating and compromising which ascribed to principals were positively related to secondary level teachers' job satisfaction in higher secondary schools. Further the outcome of their study suggested that the principals and teachers were inclined to resolve conflicts that occurred using these two styles as they believe it will heighten the relationship between the principals and teachers. Therefore, they will be satisfied to their jobs. Similarly, Farooqi (2014) revealed that collaborating conflict management style is usually linked to several positive organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, productivity, effectiveness and job performance. In a related study by Briggs (2020), among 200 employees of State and Federal ministries in Rivers State of Nigeria reported that avoiding and dominating conflict management styles were related to higher incidence of employee job satisfaction. In addition, Tetteh and Obuobisa-darko (2016) reported a significant positive relationship between a manager's avoiding style and performance rewards of subordinates. On same vein, Ahmed (2015) found dominating conflict management styles among others had significant effect on employee job satisfaction level.

Unexpectedly, no significant relationship was found between accommodating conflict management style and employee job satisfaction, leading to the rejection of H4. Nonetheless, the current result appears to be consistent with other studies that examined similar issue on

accommodating conflict management style (Chen, Zhao &Liu ,2012; Alzahrani, 2013). For example, Alzahrani (2013), in a study among Saudi Arabian and American faculty members reported an insignificant relationship between accommodating conflict management style and employee job satisfaction. Similarly, Chen, et al. (2012) found no significant relationship between accommodating conflict management style and job satisfaction among Chinese employees. The possible explanation for the insignificant result might be related to the assertion that the style supports uncooperative behavior and offers no chance to the employees to make their contribution which in turn influences the employees' job satisfaction.

The incorporation of organisational trust as a moderator was theorized to play a significant role in strengthening the positive effects of conflict management styles on employee job satisfaction. As expected, this study revealed a moderated relationship between collaborating, avoiding and compromising conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction, therefore, supporting hypotheses H6, H8 and H10.The current results appear to be line with prior studies that found the moderating effect of organisational trust (Triplett & Loh, 2017; Ozyilmaz, Erdogan, Karaeminogullari, 2017; Ramos, Ferreira & Martins. 2021; Khan, Sajjad, Orangrab & Tariq, 20   23). For instance, a study by Triplett and Loh (2017) found organisational trust to moderate the association between work locus of control and psychological safety. Similarly, Ramos et al. (2021) also revealed a moderated relationship between person-organisation fit and turnover intention sampled among 381 workers of a multinational company in Brazil. In a recent study of 252 bank employees in District Vehari of Pakistan, Khan et al. (2023) showed that the relationship between job stress and intention to leave was moderated by organisational trust. In this study, however, contrary to expectation, no moderated relationship was found between dominating and accommodating conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction, and therefore H7 and H9 were not supported.

In sum, this study once again confirmed that the use of collaborating and compromising conflict management styles by Organisation results in greater level of employee job satisfaction. Prior studies have also suggested that the use of collaborating and compromising styles plays a huge role in producing positive outcomes in the workplace.

10.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS
Firstly, the current study has offered a theoretical implication by providing additional empirical evidence in the domain of conflict management strategy. Prior studies have heavily explored the effects of conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction in the western context. Instead of focusing on western based kind of relationship this study extended the theoretical research by examining the study variables. Using these variables, this study was able to ascertain that the combination of the different styles of conflict management are more likely to demonstrate greater employee job satisfaction. Specifically, it was clear that the findings of the present study have significant implications for both the academic and non-academic members' level of job satisfaction What remains unclear is whether the effects of conflict management styles on employee job satisfaction could be generalized to a non-western work setting due to the differences in the nature of the job, and, thus, future research needs to be conducted to investigate this.

Secondly, this study has offered a theoretical implication by providing additional empirical evidence in the domain of prior studies that have reported significant relationships regarding the moderation effects of organisational trust. However, the current study offered empirical evidence of the power of organisational trust to moderate significantly between collaborating, avoiding and compromising conflict management styles. This study has exceeded beyond a mere validation of the positive effects of conflict management styles on employee job satisfaction as reported in previous literature (e.g. Griffin &Steen ,2011; Farooqi, 2014, Tetteh & Obuobisa-darko, 2016; Briggs, 2020). Undoubtedly, the interactive effect allows for a better understanding of the dynamics that exist between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction. As such, the current study has reinforced the arguments made Ramos, et al, (2021) and Khan, et al., 2023) on the potentially significant role of organisational trust   construct as a moderator.

An extensive review of the literature indicates that only a few studies have been conducted on the conflict management styles-employee job satisfaction link (Griffin & Steen ,2011; Alzahrani, 2013; Ahmed, 2015; Anastasiou,2020; Hardin, et al., 2021). Hence, the current study contributes further to the existing conflict management styles-employee job satisfaction literature. However, much more about the theoretical relationships conflict management styles-employee job satisfaction remained unexplained, especially in countries such as Nigeria and in the higher education sector where no similar research had been done, with exception of a study which on focused on only conflict management rather than on the individual styles by Mgbemena, Oraegbunam, Uzodike, and Onyekaonwn (2022) among personnel in Nigeria Bottling Company. The rest of conflict management styles-employee job satisfaction studies were conducted in the developed western societies. The context of the present study (i.e., Nigeria) is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi linguistic, and the most populated black nation in the entire world. Thus, a study of this nature is likely to be a good contribution to the extant body of knowledge.

This study also extended the conflict management styles literature given that very few studies have measured the styles of conflict management as separate variables. This study tested the concept's specific styles as separate constructs, which were found to be significantly predicting employee job satisfaction. However, more research is needed to further validate its importance in predicting employee job satisfaction.

11.1 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study have several implications for management with regards to the importance of conflict management styles, and the influence of organisational trust. They also provide guidance on how to encourage high level of satisfaction and conflict resolution among employees.

First, this study offers evidence on the importance of applying conflict management styles in resolving issues in the organization. Its application as a strategy has many positive outcomes. Therefore, the management of the various tertiary institutions can take cue and can apply the results of the current study use to promote harmonious work environment. Against this backdrop, the management of tertiary institutions should prioritize, promote and strengthen the application of the different styles of conflict management in their institutions. Doing so may minimize on the negative feeling and produce a greater sense of satisfaction among employees at the workplace. Doing so should make employees feel appreciative and respected by their Management

Finally, the current study uncovered organisational trust as an important moderating variable that strengthens the effects of conflict management styles on employee job satisfaction.

12.1 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

First, the study should determine the method. However, at times, the progression of the study determines which research method is the most appropriate. Thus, this study employed a cross-sectional study such that data were collected once within a relatively short period of time. But a cross-sectional study could not offer insights into the cause-and-effect relationships. This is because a cross-sectional study provides a snapshot of a single moment in time, which does not consider what occurs before or after the snapshot is taken. That would be the reason why a researcher should start with a cross-sectional method to first establish whether there are relationships between certain constructs. Such an attempt would then facilitate longitudinal studies among future researchers because it is more likely to determine causal relationships among constructs by virtue of its scope.

Secondly, the present study considered only academic and non-academic staff of some selected public tertiary institutions located in North-Central and North-Western regions of Nigeria. Therefore, this study should be replicated in other regions of Nigeria and in other types of higher education institutions like private universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnic, Specialized Universities and institutes, School of Nursing, Colleges of Education, and Colleges of Health Technology in order to increase the generalizability of the results.

Finally, the independent variables examined in the present study were confined to conflict management styles. Perhaps, there are other factors of employee job satisfaction that should be given a considerable attention in the Nigerian public university, such as employee engagement, job identification, organisational frustration, commitment. Hence, future researchers should incorporate them in future research.

13.1 CONCLUSION

Theoretically, important gaps exist in the literature with regards to the links between conflict management styles, and employee job satisfaction. Past studies in this area have not addressed the following in their study: (1) the moderating influence of organisational trust on the relationship between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction. The current research study has enhanced the literature by further affirming prior results regarding the significant positive relationship between conflict management styles and employee job satisfaction in a newer context (Nigeria) and setting (public university). The current study demonstrated that collaborating, dominating, avoiding and compromising conflict management styles significantly and positively influenced employee job satisfaction. Against these backdrops, the current study will be relevant to the Nigerian public university system that is currently grappling with the problem of increasing and incessant strikes usually embarked upon by both academic and non-academic staff.

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